

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KATHMA 02511 030804Z

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SUBJECT: NEPALESE SOVIET RELATIONS

1. HMG HAS USED OCCASION OF DEPARTURE FROM POST OF SOVIET AMBASSADOR KIRNASOVSKY TO PRIASE STATE OF NEPALESE-SOVIET BILATERAL RELATIONS IN FASHION USUALLY RESERVED FOR ITS IMMEDIATE NEIGHBORS. IN ADDITION TO EXPECTED PLAUDITS FROM VAIRETY OF FRONT ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS SOVIET FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY, SEMI-OFFICIAL PAPERS (RISING NEPAL, GORKHAPATRA) HAVE GIVEN PROMINENT COVERAGE TO DEPARTURE AND HAVE RUN LAUDATORY EDITORIALS.

2. GORKHAPATRA EDITORIAL OF MAY 27 IS TYPICAL: IT NOTES THAT DESPITE DIFFERENT SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEMS "MUTUAL FRIENDSHIP AND CORDIAL COOPERATION HAVE BEEN STRENGTHENED." PAPER GOES ON TO LIST NUMBER OF IMPORTANT SOVIET AID PROJECTS, INCLUDING CAPITAL INVESTMENT IN INDUSTRY AND AGRICULTURE. "THE POSITIVE ATTITUDE OF THE USSR TOWARD NEPAL," IT CONCLUDES, "WILL FURTHER EXPAND THE SCOPE OF BILATERAL FRIENDSHIP." OTHER KATHMANDU PAPERS HAVE USED KIRNASOVSKY'S DEPARTURE AS KEYNOTE TO REVIEW SUCCESS OF NEPAL-SOVIET FRIENDSHIP. THE RISING NEPAL'S EDITORIAL OF MAY 28 WAS VIETUALLY
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PAGE 02 KATHMA 02511 030804Z

IDENTIAL TO THAT OF GORKHAPATRA AND PRESUMABLY REPRESENTS

THE SAME GOVERNMENT BRIEFING.

3. COMMENT: THAT KIRNASOVSKY'S DEPARTURE SHOULD BE WIDELY REPORTED IS NOT SURPRISING IN VIEW OF HIS LONG TENURE IN NEPAL BUT EFFUSIVE PRAISE OF SOVIET EFFORTS IS EXTREMELY UNUSUAL, PARTICULARLY IN SEMI-OFFICIAL PRESS. IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS KING BIRENDRA AND SENIOR HMG OFFICIALS HAVE EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE SKEPTICISM ABOUT THE SOVIET ROLE IN THE AREA AND HAVE TENDED TO ASSUME THAT SOVIETS SUPPORT INDIAN AMBITIONS TO NEPAL'S DISADVANTAGE. SIMILARLY, THERE HAS BEEN SOME DISSATISFACTION WITH SOVIET AID LEVELS IN NEPAL, AS WELL AS THE SOVIET REFUSAL TO PROVIDE GRANT ASSISTANCE. THIS COOLNESS HAS BEEN REFLECTED BY SOVIET EMBASSY OFFICERS WHO HAVE COMPLAINED FROM TIME TO TIME THAT THE USSR IS NOT GIVEN DUE CREDIT FOR ITS EFFORTS BY GON OFFICIALS, INTENT ON MAINTAINING THE DELICATE EQUILIBRIUM WITH NEPAL'S NEIGHBORS.

4. THE GON HAS PROBABLY NOW DECIDED TO REDRESS THE BALANCE AND GIVE NEPAL-SOVIET RELATIONS A BOOST. THE FLURRY OF PRO-SOVIET ARTICLES SHOULD GO PART WAY IN ASSURING THE RUSSIANS THAT DESPITE DIFFERENCES, THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IS IMPORTANT TO NEPAL. MORE PROBABLY THE CAMPAIGN HAS INDIAN SENSITIVITIES VERY MUCH IN MIND AND WOULD APPEAR CONSONANT WITH RECENT HMG EFFORTS TO ASSURE INDIA THAT NOT ALL OF NEPAL'S ATTENTION IS DIRECTED TOWARD PEKING.
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